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Assessment Highlights

Grade 9 Social Studies



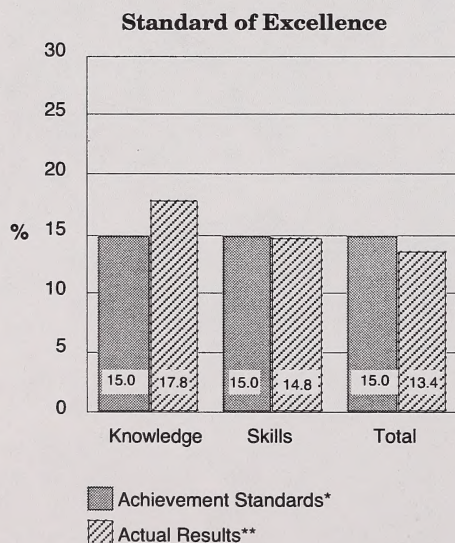
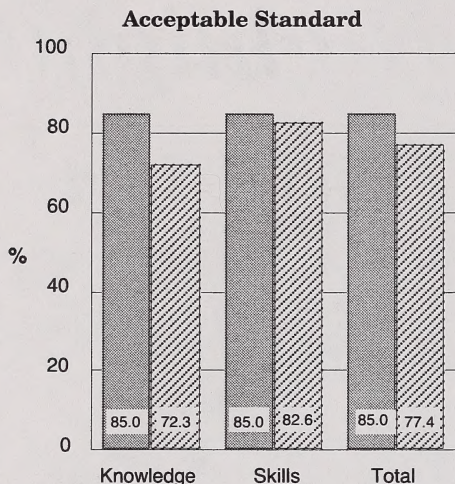
June 1995

Assessment Highlights

Grade 9 Social Studies

This report provides teachers, school administrators, and the public with an overview of the results for the June 1995 Grade 9 Social Studies provincial assessment. It complements the detailed school and jurisdiction reports.

Percentage of Students Meeting:



*the percentage of students in the province expected to meet the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence

**the percentage of students in the province who met the standards (based on those who wrote)

Who Wrote the Test?

All students registered in Grade 9 were expected to write the 1995 Social Studies Achievement Test. A total of 34 655 students completed the test. This number reflects an increase of about 5 400 students over 1991, the last year the test was written. In 1995, only a small proportion of students in Grade 9 did not write the test: 3.8% were absent and 2.9% were excused from writing by their superintendent.

What Was the Test Like?

The assessment consisted of 60 multiple-choice questions based on three social studies topics; Topic A is Economic Growth: U.S.A., Topic B is Economic Growth: A Case Study of the Former U.S.S.R., and Topic C is Canada: Responding to Change.

The test was organized by grouping questions according to key concepts rather than by topic (unit).

How Well Did Students Do?

As shown by the graphs, the number of students meeting the acceptable standard on the total test was lower than expected. More students than expected met the standard of excellence on the knowledge component of the test.

In 5.5% of the schools, the percentage of students meeting the acceptable standard was significantly above expectations for the province. In 55.1% of the schools the percentage was not significantly different from provincial expectations. In 39.4% of schools, the percentage of students meeting the acceptable standard was significantly below provincial expectations. Schools where fewer than five students wrote the Grade 9 test are not included in the calculations.

The results presented in this report are based on scores achieved by all students except those in Francophone programs. Results for Francophone students will be reported separately. Detailed provincial test results are provided in school and jurisdiction reports.

Has Achievement Changed Over Time?

A special study of changes in achievement was conducted as part of the provincial assessment. Results show that social studies achievement in 1995 is unchanged from 1991.

Test Blueprint

The blueprint shows the distribution of questions according to the curricular content area (topic) being assessed and according to the knowledge and skills required to answer the question.

		Topic A Economic Growth: U.S.A.			Topic B Economic Growth : A Case Study of the Former U.S.S.R.					Topic C Canada: Responding to Change			Number of questions
		Industrial-ization	Market Economy	Quality of Life	Geography	Industrial-ization	Centrally Planned Economy	Quality of Life	Economic Change	Technology	Mixed Economy	Quality of Life	
Knowledge	Understands generalizations, concepts, related concepts, terms and facts	1	24	44	23	13	31	47	59	7	39	46	30
		2	25	45		14	32	48	60	8	40	54	
		3	26	53			33			16	42	55	
		20								17			
Skills	Locating , interpreting, and organizing	5	41	49	21	11	34	51	58	15	27	56	30
		10	30							18		35	
	Analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating	4	28	50	22	12	36	52	57	6	38	37	
		9	29							19	43		
	Number of questions	20			20					20			

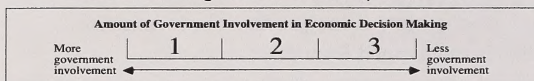
Test Review

The Grade 9 teachers who reviewed and set standards for the assessment felt that it adequately covered both knowledge and skills in all three topics and that it was a good reflection of the social studies program. The majority of teachers indicated that there were too many questions on quality of life and that this concept should have less emphasis when assessing performance in the course. The group felt that the test used a good variety of readings, graphs, charts and cartoons.

Observations and Sample Questions

Sample questions from the test and accompanying discussion are provided to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of students meeting the acceptable standard and the standard of excellence. For each sample question, there is an asterisk beside the correct answer.

Use the following chart to answer question 27.

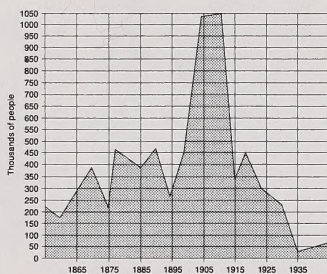


27. The number 2 represents a
- *A. mixed economy
 - B. market economy
 - C. traditional economy
 - D. centrally planned economy

Use the following sources to answer question 9.

Source I

Immigration to the United States, 1860–1935



—from *People, Technology and Change*

Source II

Labour Force in the United States, 1905–1955

Year	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate (%)
1905	30 918 000	1 381 000	4.35
1915	36 223 000	3 337 000	8.50
1925	43 716 000	1 453 000	3.20
1935	42 260 000	10 610 000	20.10
1945	52 820 000	1 040 000	1.90
1955	62 170 000	2 852 000	4.40

—from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*

9. The information in the sources supports the conclusion that
- A. immigration rose during periods of high unemployment
 - *B. immigration declined during periods of high unemployment
 - C. small numbers of immigrants were needed to provide skilled labour
 - D. large numbers of immigrants were needed to fill jobs created by industry

Acceptable Standard

For **question 27**, students needed to have a basic understanding of the role of government in different economic systems in order to interpret information from a chart. Most of the students who met the *acceptable standard* were able to do this.

For **question 9**, students were required to synthesize information to draw a conclusion. Results indicate that 25% of students who met the *acceptable standard* had difficulty with this.

33. A person who supports a centrally planned economic system would **most** value
- A. materialism
 - B. competition
 - *C. cooperation
 - D. individuality

Use the following cartoon to answer question 30



What we want is something new. If it does anything, so much the better.

30. What is the **main** point of the cartoon?
- A. Government regulations often limit the choice of products in the marketplace.
 - *B. Businesses often develop products for profit rather than for consumer use.
 - C. Consumers are used as a testing ground for many new products.
 - D. Consumers benefit most from research and development.

For **question 33**, students needed to have a basic understanding of the beliefs/values in a centrally planned economy. Only 61% of students meeting the *acceptable standard* understood this concept. Over 90% of students meeting the *standard of excellence* had no difficulty with this question.

The strengths of students who met the *acceptable standard* include an ability to:

- understand to a limited degree the concepts of market, mixed and centrally planned economies, quality of life, industrialization and technology
- interpret information from graphs, charts, and maps

However, many of these students did not do as well as expected in:

- understanding the concept of a centrally planned economy and the meaning of quality of life in the former Soviet Union
- synthesizing information to make conclusions or generalizations

Standard of Excellence

For **question 30**, students needed to interpret a cartoon to identify point of view. Most of those students meeting the *standard of excellence* answered this question correctly.

For **question 52**, students were required to synthesize information to make a generalization. Only 42% of the students who met the *acceptable standard* and 66% of students meeting the *standard of excellence* answered this question correctly.

Students who met the *standard of excellence* were able to:

- understand the concepts of industrialization, technology, market, mixed, and centrally planned economies and quality of life
- interpret and analyze information from a variety of sources

Use the following opinions to answer question 52.

**A Comparison Made in 1985 Between
American and Soviet Societies**

Opinion I

I feel that there are different ways of comparing the United States and the Soviet Union. The most frequent comparison used in the West shows that average wages in the United States are much higher than in the Soviet Union, and that there are more TV sets, tape recorders, and recreational vehicles. The sweeping conclusion that American citizens are better off than Soviet citizens is based on these facts.

Opinion II

I suggest that facts could be selected to the obvious credit of the Soviet Union: the steady growth in real income; the stability of retail prices; full employment, free education, and health services for all; taxes and rents that are a fraction of those in America; cheap and convenient public transport; and so on.

52. The opinions **best** support the generalization that
- A. materialism is an important part of quality of life
 - *B. quality of life is difficult to compare between nations
 - C. propaganda is always present when comparing societies
 - D. wages are the most accurate way of comparing standards of living

- synthesize information to draw conclusions, make generalizations, and determine values underlying a position

However, some of these students did not do as well as expected in:

- synthesizing information from readings to draw conclusions

Comments

Revised 1995-96 Blueprint

One area of concern that emerged from the assessment was that there was too much emphasis on quality of life, even though it is a major concept appearing in all three topics. This issue was raised by the teachers setting standards for the test as well as other teachers who commented on the test.

A revised blueprint for the Grade 9 Social Studies Achievement Test was discussed and approved by teachers setting standards for the test. The number of questions on quality of life has been reduced. The revised blueprint is in the 1995-96 Grade 9 Social Studies Information Bulletin.

Resolving Administration Anomalies

Although we announced the new practice of reusing items from 1992, 1993, or 1994 tests, and the securing of these tests as late as October 1994, most schools were able to respond quickly and were successful in avoiding the use of these tests with students. Consequently, the 1995 testing was conducted effectively throughout Alberta without compromising the validity of the results. In a few schools, however, questions were raised about students' prior access to the test items and concerns were rightfully expressed about fairness and accuracy. Superintendents were asked to investigate, along with school principals and teachers, these and all other non-standard testing practices brought to our attention and to make recommendations about the validity of the results. Initially 9 student results for Grade 9 social studies were

reported as “not available,” pending further investigation due to validity concerns. In the end, results for only 6 students were determined to be invalid for Grade 9 social studies.

Release of Secured Items

As outlined in the General Information Bulletin, items from the achievement tests are secured except those that are released each year in the subject area bulletins. The items in these bulletins may be used to prepare students for the provincial assessment. The subject area bulletins are mailed to all schools in the fall.

Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement Testing

Last spring, we sent to schools copies of the *Parent Guide to Provincial Achievement Testing* to distribute to parents through the students in grades 3, 6, and 9. The purpose was to support open communication about provincial standards and the testing program among the teacher, the student, and the parent. The guide included a tear-out card with several questions and space for comments. Parents returned over 2000 cards; about half included comments. Parents' feedback about the learnings expected of students, the quality of questions on the tests, and the testing program was generally positive. Their written comments ranged from positive to negative, and many simply asked for more information. As parents seemed to appreciate this form of communication, we are looking for a way to make the guide available again later this school year.

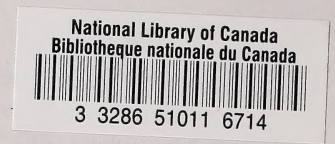
Performance-Based Assessment

In addition to writing the achievement tests, a random sample of students from across the province participated in a performance-based assessment in **Language Arts 3, Mathematics 6,** and **Social Studies 9** in 1995.

Performance-based assessment reports will be sent to participating schools and a summary of provincial results will be sent to all schools in November 1995. A "*Samples of Student Responses*" document for the performance-based assessment will be prepared and made available to all schools in the spring of 1996.

1995 Administration—A Note of Thanks

We at Student Evaluation wish to express our appreciation to you, the principals and teachers throughout Alberta, for the care and attention you gave to the administration of the 1995 achievement tests. Successful implementation of the expanded program and the changes in procedures and rules depended on your assistance and cooperation. We hope that you find the changes in the testing and the additional achievement information helpful in your work with students.



For further information, contact Douglas D. Burns, Assessment Specialist, or Dennis Belyk, Assistant Director at 403-427-0010. The toll free number is 310-0000.



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